

In the United States Court of Federal Claims
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS
No. 20-1914V

ANDREA LEPERA,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Chief Special Master Corcoran

Filed: April 11, 2024

Leah VaSahnja Durant, Law Offices of Leah V. Durant, PLLC, Washington, DC, for Petitioner.

Mary Eileen Holmes, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.

DECISION ON ATTORNEY'S FEES AND COSTS¹

On December 21, 2020, Andrea Lepera filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleged that she suffered from a shoulder injury related to vaccine administration as a result of an influenza vaccine administered to her left arm on September 18, 2019. Petition, ECF No. 1. On August 28, 2023, I issued a decision awarding compensation to Petitioner based on the parties' stipulation. ECF No. 36.

¹ Because this Decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action taken in this case, it must be made publicly accessible and will be posted on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, and/or at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/uscourts/national/cofc>, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2018) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the Decision will be available to anyone with access to the internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), Petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, I agree that the identified material fits within this definition, I will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all section references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2018).

Petitioner has now filed a motion for attorney's fees and costs, requesting an award of \$29,355.34 (representing \$27,002.80 in fees plus \$2,352.54 in costs). Application for Fees and Costs ("Motion") filed Feb. 26, 2024, ECF No. 41. Furthermore, Petitioner filed a signed statement representing that Petitioner incurred \$6.50 in personal out-of-pocket expenses. *Id.* at 2.

Respondent reacted to the motion on Feb. 26, 2024, reporting that he is satisfied that the statutory requirements for an award of attorney's fees and costs are met in this case, but deferring resolution of the amount to be awarded to my discretion. Respondent's Response to Motion at 2-3, ECF No. 42. Petitioner filed a reply on Feb. 27, 2024, reiterating her request for fees and costs as indicated in the Motion. ECF No. 43.

The rates requested for work performed through the end of 2023 are reasonable and consistent with our prior determinations, and will therefore be adopted. And all time billed to the matter was also reasonably incurred. Furthermore, Petitioner has provided supporting documentation for all claimed costs. ECF No. 41-2. Respondent offered no specific objection to the rates or amounts sought.

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs for successful claimants. Section 15(e). Accordingly, I hereby GRANT Petitioner's Motion for attorney's fees and costs. **I award a total amount of \$29,361.84³ as follows:**

- **A lump sum of \$29,355.34, representing reimbursement for fees and costs, in the form of a check payable jointly to Petitioner and Petitioner's counsel, Leah V. Durant, and**
- **A lump sum of \$6.50, representing reimbursement for Petitioner's costs, in the form of a check payable to Petitioner.**

In the absence of a timely-filed motion for review (see Appendix B to the Rules of the Court), the Clerk of Court shall enter judgment in accordance with this Decision.⁴

³ This amount is intended to cover all legal expenses incurred in this matter. This award encompasses all charges by the attorney against a client, "advanced costs" as well as fees for legal services rendered. Furthermore, § 15(e)(3) prevents an attorney from charging or collecting fees (including costs) that would be in addition to the amount awarded herein. See *generally Beck v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 924 F.2d 1029 (Fed. Cir.1991).

⁴ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), the parties may expedite entry of judgment by filing a joint notice renouncing their right to seek review.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Brian H. Corcoran

Brian H. Corcoran
Chief Special Master